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S.W. Thomas Frankland

CAUTIONS

TO

YOUNG SPORTSMEN.



[PRICE SIXPENCE.]

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London:

sold by

JAMES ROBSON, NEW BOND STREET.

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J. SMEETON, PRINTER, ST. MARTIN'S LANE,

1800.



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THEY ARE NOT TO BE USED

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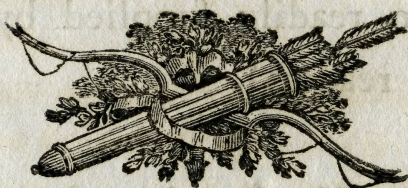
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THE writer of the following Letter might perhaps have made it more impressivè, if he had collected into one view a number of the accidents which have happened from the ignorance, or negligence, of those who take GUNS in hand; but he fears that any deficiency on this melancholy head will be but too readily supplied by most of his readers!

He has introduced the *name* of only one person, and that for the purpose of recording the



good judgment of a keen and high-spirited sportsman, whose apprehensions were well founded, as appears by one of the few accidents alluded to. That which relates to the blowing up of a powder-flask, in the act of loading, points out a source of danger seldom taken into consideration.



CAUTIONS



# CAUTIONS

TO

## YOUNG SPORTSMEN.

DEAR SIR,

IN answer to your questions on the subject of SHOOTING, and particularly referring yourself to my opinion on *double-barrelled Guns*, I shall endeavour to give you such hints as my experience may render of any service to you.

Whether a sportsman who has the perfect management of a *double Gun* can kill more game with it in a season than he or another person, *cæteris paribus*, can with a *single*, is not here the question; but whether the many circumstances



of inconvenience and danger attending the *double*, do not overballance the advantages, admitted to their fullest extent; and whether upon the whole it is desirable for a young, or indeed any sportsman to use one.

You are aware that we adopted the double Gun from the French; among whom the few who, under the old government, had the liberty of shooting, frequently got more shots in one day than you do in a month. From the abundance of game they had the opportunity of picking their shots, which made very small charges answer their purpose; besides that, their shoulders could not have supported such as we find more effectual. The smallness of the charge required admitted of the French Guns being made so slight that many persons in this country have supposed their iron of a quality superior to ours; but many of them have been burst here with very moderate charges. I shall mention one instance of their extreme thinness—that I had once a double Gun from the reputed best maker in Paris, in which the  
pattern



pattern of the ornaments chased on each side of the sight were distinctly seen indented on looking through the barrels. Because the French Guns are usually made too slight for our purpose, it does not follow that we cannot make them safe; but the fact is, that from fear of overweight, and of the breech being made so wide that the left cock should be reached with difficulty, we have made them so slight that I am sorry to say I could furnish you with a well attested catalogue of double Guns, of English make, burst within these few years, attended with various injuries. It must however be acknowledged that the objection of the locks being too far separated is entirely removed by one of the patents now in force, by which the utmost strength required may be introduced at the breech.

That you may not suppose I recommend high loading I must explain myself more fully, by observing that if a man expects to get fifteen or twenty shots in a day it will be of no advantage

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tage to him to use such a charge as would be more agreeable to his shoulder in case he should get two hundred; and that one ounce and three quarters, or seven eights, of shot will tell better in the field than the Frenchman's charge-meagre of one ounce. Two ounces of shot is the charge proposed in Page's ingenious treatise on "Shooting Flying;" you will therefore hardly think that my using one ounce and three quarters can class me with those shooters against whom the following severe restriction was levelled, at the foot of an advertisement for pigeon shooting, at Billingsbear Warren-house,—*N. B. No person to be allowed to load with more than four ounces of shot!*—A game-keeper, to whom I mentioned this, laughed, and said he thought it *a pretty fair allowance*. On my asking him what weight of shot he himself used, he answered that he divided *one pound into five charges*.

A friend of mine, seeing his keeper equipping himself for a pigeon match, was curious to examine the terrors of the prepared charge, and  
trying



trying it with the rammer, expressed his surprize at finding it rather *less* than usual. *Ob! Sir,* replied the keeper, *I have only put in the POWDER yet.*

Of this school are the wild-fowl shooters; in one of whose guns, of six feet barrel, I lately measured a charge to the height of *eleven fingers*.—*Sir, I likes to give my Gun a belly-ful.*

He who gives a double Gun the greatest advantage has both locks cocked when he prepares to shoot, and discharges each barrel in succession, either at separate objects or the same, as circumstances may require, without removing the butt from his shoulder. Should only one trigger be drawn, there remains one lock cocked; and though there *may* be shooters who have never once omitted to let down the unused cock to the half-bent, I appeal to numbers whether they have not, at some time or other, detected themselves in having loaded one barrel while the lock



lock of that which remained undischarged was still cocked! On making this discovery, in his own case, the late Sir George Armytage immediately laid aside the *double Gun*. But there is a noted sportsman, still fortunately alive, in Yorkshire, who discarded it on still stronger ground; for while he was loading one barrel the charge of the other passed so near his body as to tear his waistcoat!

Though there may be some advantage in having both locks cocked, it is very practicable to take the Gun down from the shoulder, on having missed a bird with the first barrel, cock, and kill the same bird with the second barrel.

If both locks are cocked it is usual to pull the hinder trigger first. If the forward trigger is drawn first, there is a risk of the finger slipping over it when it gives way, and touching that behind. Whether this sometimes happens, or one is shaken off by the recoil, or the fears are made so long as to touch one another, it is certain



certain that both barrels are sometimes unintentionally discharged by one pull. I was witness to this happening in the hands of a late keeper, in Berkshire, who twice, in succession, fired both barrels at once at woodcocks. I was at the edge of the cover, and could just perceive an interval between the sound of the two explosions. On taxing him with the fact he acknowledged it; but could give no account how it had happened; and seemed well satisfied on producing his two birds, most compleatly peppered.

If only one lock is cocked, the wrong trigger may be drawn; and not answering the pull, whatever part of the work is weakest may be strained, or even broke.

From the practice of drawing the hinder trigger first, when birds are wild, and a second shot seldom to be had, I have seen persons shoot for several days together without firing the right-hand barrel. By this means it is evident that  
one



one barrel and lock will be worn out before the other. When only one half of a gun is thus brought into use, there seems no compensation for the extra weight; and surely a single barrell'd gun with a reasonably larger charge would make a better figure. Indeed if your dogs are broke to lie down, till you have reloaded, more shots may be frequently got with a single than, where they are permitted to run in, with a double gun.

Whether the *aim* of a double or single Gun suits your age best, must be determined by yourself. Though a random fight is more readily caught with the former, there seems a confusion in it from the two muzzles, breeches, and locks, unfavourable to correctness; and it is so different from that of the latter, that whenever you change from one to the other, you will hardly fail to find an inconvenience.

There is indeed a kind of double Gun, known by the name of *Turnabout*, which, however little

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in use at present, has the following advantages over that which is in fashion.

As there is no lock to be reached on the left side, there can be no plea for weakening the breech by contracting its width.

There being only one trigger, no mistake can arise from it.

The aim being the same as with a single Gun, no inconvenience can arise in changing occasionally from one to the other.

The discharged barrel being regularly turned below the other, the two are equally used; as are also the hammers.

Those who never cock their Gun till they raise it to the shoulder, cannot be guilty of loading with a lock cocked.

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The muzzle of the barrel to be loaded being always uppermost, as the butt is on the ground, there is less probability of a charge being put into the wrong barrel; which in loading hastily sometimes happens; and I cannot but think that Guns have actually been burst from this mistake remaining undiscovered; all the blame being unjustly laid on the maker.

If, however, you should not be discouraged by the hazards which I have pointed out, the weight, and two-fold expence of a *double Gun*, and its invidious name, in case you should be reported to have trespassed on your neighbour with one in your hand, I shall give you a few hints on the management of it; concluding with some more general cautions.

If you have discharged only one barrel, and are reloading it, before you return the rammer be careful to secure the wadding of the unfired barrel, which from the recoil usually becomes

loose.



loose. This is not only necessary lest the shot should fall out, but for safety, as in case of a space between the shot and wadding, the sudden resistance which the shot would meet with, on striking the wadding, might endanger the barrel. I know an instance of a hand being injured a few years since by a Gun bursting, as it was judged, from this cause alone; for one barrel had been fired several times in succession, and this precaution had not been taken with the other; which burst on the first discharge.

Whether you ram the unfired barrel before or after you have shotted the other, adopt one regular time for the operation, lest it should be entirely omitted. If you leave the rammer in the unfired barrel till you have poured shot into the other, be careful that none of it falls into that which holds the rammer, as it may jam, so as to give you considerable trouble,

If birds rise together, and near the shooter, it is not uncommon to see him spoil one, with the first barrel, that another may be shot at a proper distance; and if the first is shot well, the second has frequently got so far as to be only wounded, or missed. If there is a very small interval between the time of their rising, the *Turnabout* will answer your purpose as well as the common double Gun; and I have shewn that it has some advantages over it.

Let me strictly enjoin you to forbear cocking your Gun till you are actually raising it to the shoulder. Be assured that it is perfectly unnecessary; and that if you are even in expectation of a rabbit crossing a narrow path before you, no advantage will be gained by it. But if there should be any, a little reflection will convince you, that is too dearly purchased by a practice which has given rise to so many accidents.

I have



I have a pleasure in considering that I have not only trained young sportsmen in the right way, but have reclaimed even old offenders from this dangerous habit.

I have seen a Gun fired unintentionally by awkwardness in letting down the cock from the whole to the half bent. To avoid this, be careful not to remove your thumb from the cock till after having let it pass beyond the half bent, and gently raised it again, you hear the sound of the fear catching the tumbler.

On account of Guns being usually carried in the field with the muzzle pointed to the left, and the execrable practice of keeping them cocked, If you have occasion to shoot with a stranger, I shall advise you to plead for the right-hand station, that you cannot hit a bird flying to the left. With a game-keeper take the right-hand without ceremony. In getting over a fence, except you are well assured of your

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new companion's care, it will be safer to compliment him with the honour of preceding you; (an honour which, by the bye, in a thick black-thorn hedge, it may require some little speechifying to force upon his modesty) you will otherwise frequently find, that while you were passing the hedge, his Gun—cocked—had kept guard—with good aim at your back;—and except you file off as soon as you are clear, the same aim will be kept up till he is clear of the hedge likewise. Should you remonstrate, the usual answer is, *My dear Sir, I assure you, I am remarkably careful.*

Should he appear to consider a cocked Gun as the best tool to beat bushes with, tell him you are too nervous to touch a feather in company, and get out of shot as fast as you can.

When you cross a ditch be upon your guard, that in case of falling your muzzle may be immediately directed upwards. Few persons indeed have sufficient practice in falling to bring  
this



this to a regular habit, but remember that you may fall!

If you should think it necessary to put your Gun into any attendant's hands, either for a time, or to be carried home, let me recommend to you to secure the flint or hammer by some sort of case, which any man may invent and make of leather himself; or go a step farther, and draw the charge. I do not approve of shaking out the priming; in which case the Gun will be considered as unloaded, (except that the rammer is put into, and left in, the barrel,) and it is a fact, that Guns have been fired when no priming has appeared in the pan.

I shall here point out a source of danger to which you are exposed, from the charge of powder which you are in the act of pouring into the barrel being inflamed, either by tow left in it after cleaning, or a part of the wadding remaining on fire within. I can hardly suppose this to have happened where card-wadding was used; it  
may



may from paper; but tow seems more hazardous. In some instances the charge alone has been inflamed, the top of the flask having been removed in time; or the slider preventing communication with its contents. But it has happened that the whole flask has been blown up; and not many months since in the case of a gentleman in a northern county, attended with the loss of sight. This hazard is easily obviated, by any method of detaching the measured charge of powder from the flask, before it is poured into the barrel.

In drying gunpowder, be careful to separate from your magazine, of whatever kind, the mere quantity which you wish to dry at once; suppose five or six charges; thus, in case of an accident, you may escape, like myself, with burnt eyebrows and eyelashes;—but should you pour into a shovel, unfortunately over-heated, from your stock, even of a single pound, however *cerebri felicem*, nothing will save you.

I remem-



I remember your laughing at my hyper-caution, when handling various Guns in the maker's shop, I shifted the muzzles so that at no one instant any one was pointed at a limb of the several persons around us. I was not then exerting any particular care; the practice was habitual to me; and I wish to impress upon your mind, that with respect to the muzzle being suffered, during the fraction of a second, to point towards any human being, *a Gun should always be considered as loaded.* How have the numerous accidents happened from the kitchen wit of terrifying the maids, by threatening to shoot them, but in presuming Guns not to be loaded? In some of these cases the trigger has been drawn unintentionally;—in others, with a view to study the passion of terror in the human countenance, (inexcusable thus, even in a painter) by snapping the lock;—sometimes in a struggle from persons interfering. This species of frolic, I fear, has not been totally confined



confined to the kitchen;—but on this head I chuse to be silent.

I have not written thus to deter you from a captivating amusement, but to enable you to enjoy it with greater security. Many of your friends could have told you all that I have done, and much more; but till they shall take the trouble to do it, neglect not what I have intended for your advantage.

FINIS.